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- SOMBART, W. "*Socialism and the social movement*." Translated from the German by DR. M. EPSTEIN. (London: Dent. 1912. 3s. 6d.)
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### Statistics and Its Methods

*The Mortality of Alcohol. A Statistical Approximation of the Deaths in the United States in Which Alcohol may Figure as a Causative or Contributory Factor*. By EDWARD BUNNELL PHELPS. Reprinted from the "American Underwriter Magazine and Insurance Review," Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, September, 1911. (New York: Thrift Publishing Company. 1911. Pp. vi, 75. \$2.)

We have in this study the first serious attempt to estimate the influence of alcohol upon the death-rate in the United States. The ingenious method was as follows: From the 187 causes of death which were given in the mortality statistics of the registration area of the United States, 106 were selected in which it was thought that alcohol might have had some influence in causing or hastening death. In the first estimate attempt was made to discover what share of the deaths of males between the ages of 20 and 74 from these 106 diseases was to be directly or remotely connected with alcohol. With this end in view the list was sent to three medical directors of insurance companies, who were requested to put opposite the name of each cause of death a personal estimate of the percentage of male deaths from that cause, between

the ages of 20 and 74, which presumably was directly or indirectly due to alcohol. When these estimates were received by the author he took the arithmetic average of the three estimates as representative of the medical opinion of the country at large. With this percentage and the number of male deaths between the ages of 20 and 74 in the registration area of the United States in 1908, it was a comparatively simple matter to obtain by multiplication the probable number of deaths between these ages which were directly or indirectly due to alcohol. According to this computation, 32,853 of the 198,858 male deaths between these ages, from the 106 causes of death included in the tables, were in whole or part due to alcohol; or 16.5 per cent of the total number of deaths in question. When deaths from all causes among males between the ages of 20 and 74 are considered, the percentage in which alcohol presumably figured becomes 13.2.

Up to this point deaths of males have been alone considered. A second assumption is now made: that the death-rate from alcohol among females was only one fifth as great as among males. When this factor is considered, the ratio of deaths for both sexes, in which alcohol presumably figured, is fixed at 8.4 per cent of the entire number of deaths at adult ages in the registration area.

The estimate is then extended to include both sexes at all ages in Continental United States in 1908, with the conclusion that alcohol may have been directly or indirectly responsible for about 66,000 deaths or 5.1 per cent of the total mortality from all causes at all ages. The accuracy of this estimate rests upon the reliability of the physicians' estimate of the percentage of male deaths, from each of these causes, which are directly or indirectly due to alcohol. In some cases the estimates of the three physicians are very close together, but in other cases far apart.

	Dr. X	Dr. Y	Dr. Z	Average
Heat and sunstroke	10	95	25	43
Tuberculosis of lungs	2	25	8	12
Chronic bronchitis	2	25	10	12
Hemorage of lungs	5	25	1	10

These are extreme cases but they show the lack of agreement between the physicians who made the estimate. In fact, in 79 out of 106 cases the estimate of Dr. Y was at least twice as great as

that of Dr. X, and in over a dozen cases it was at least 10 times as great. It seems somewhat doubtful whether the average of these three estimates could be accepted as equivalent to the consensus of medical opinion in the United States. Confidence in the estimates would have been increased if to these had been added the opinions of certain general practitioners in city and country and certain specialists in different sections of Continental United States. The estimate that alcohol is responsible for one fifth as many deaths among females as males is also somewhat rough.

A minister in New York City is reported to have stated recently from his pulpit that "liquor kills 440 out of every 1,000 every year." Until a scientific study of this important subject had been made, we were bound to have such crude estimates; but, thanks to this book, we now have an estimate which is reasonably close to the truth, and one which will at least afford a scientific basis for discussion.

W. B. BAILEY.

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#### NEW BOOKS

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To be reviewed.

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——— *Zur Geschichte der hessischen Statistik und ihrer amtlichen Organisation*. (Darmstadt. 1911. Pp. 72.)

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